



LIFEPOINT  
*Family*  
WORKBOOK

LIFEPOINT  
*Family*

THIS BOOK BELONGS TO

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# What's the Point?

## SESSION 1

### 1

The \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus is  
our salvation and motivation

*\*Romans 8:1 – There is therefore now no condemnation  
for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God  
for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also  
to the Greek.*

**- Romans 1:16**

**Christianity isn't primarily good advice. It's good  
news that has saving and transforming power.**

*For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."*

**- Romans 1:17**

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## 2

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**Where the \_\_\_\_\_ speaks,  
\_\_\_\_\_ speaks**

- *Written over 2,000 years*
- *3 languages*
- *40 different human authors; 1 divine author*

*All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.*

**- 2 Timothy 3:16**

God + breathed = **theo + pneustos**

*\*2 Peter 1:21 - For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

***\*Hebrews 4:12** - For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

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# 3

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**The \_\_\_\_\_ inside us is better  
than \_\_\_\_\_ beside us**

*It's to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper (Holy Spirit) will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you.*

**- John 16:7**

***\*Acts 1:8** - But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*

***\*John 16:14** - He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.*



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# 4

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**Discipleship isn't a \_\_\_\_\_ in the church;  
it's the \_\_\_\_\_ of the church**

*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.*

**- Matthew 28:19-20**

**Before someone can make disciples,  
they have to be a disciple.**

*\*Hebrews 10:24-25 - And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

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# 5

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**We \_\_\_\_\_ on Sunday as the church,  
we \_\_\_\_\_ during the week to be the church**

***Ekklesia*** – an assembly of people

***\*Colossians 3:16** - Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

*Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.*

***- Matthew 4:19***

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# 6

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**We are \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_**

*As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.*

***- John 20:21***

**\*Matthew 28:19a** - Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...

all nations = all ethnicities

+ See a list of our Outreach Partners in Appendix 5 on page 85 +

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7

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**We're \_\_\_\_\_ generation away  
from \_\_\_\_\_ our doors**

**75% of people who become believers in  
America do so between the ages of 4-14.**

“

**Whatever a child believes by age 13 is in  
most cases what they will die believing.**

- George Barna

**\*Deuteronomy 6:5-6** - You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

**- Deuteronomy 6:7**

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## 8

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**Apart from Him, we can do \_\_\_\_\_**

*Apart from me, you can do nothing.*

**- John 15:5**

### **1. Prayer is fellowshiping with God.**

**\*Luke 11:2-4** - And he said to them, "When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation."

*\*Romans 8:15 - For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"*

**2. Prayer is also our fuel for the mission.**

“

**Prayer is a wartime walkie talkie for the accomplishment of His mission.**

- John Piper

# What is a church?

## SESSION 2

### The Church Defined<sup>1</sup>

The local church is a committed group of born again believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord. They organize under qualified leadership as they gather regularly to worship by singing, preaching, and observing the biblical ordinances of baptism and communion. The local church is unified by the Spirit, pursues holiness together, and scatters to fulfill the Great Commandment and the Great Commission on mission for God's glory and their joy.

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<sup>1</sup> Sometimes the New Testament describes “the church” in a universal, all-believers everywhere sense (see **Acts 8:3; 9:31**). However, in the New Testament, “the church” most often refers to a specific assembly of believers. This session uses “church” in the local, specific sense.

## Why do we think commitment is important?

### ***Biblical Reasons***

The first church \_\_\_\_\_ its people.

Elders are responsible for \_\_\_\_\_ Christians.

Christians are responsible to \_\_\_\_\_ leaders.

A local group of believers \_\_\_\_\_ to mutual accountability.

### ***Practical Reasons***

Shepherding

Growth

Serving

# Belonging in the Family

## SESSION 3

### LifePoint's Commitment to You

We commit to lovingly care for you and seek your growth in Christ.

**(Hebrews 13:17; 1 Thess. 5:12)**

We commit to provide teaching, preaching, and guidance from the whole counsel of God's Word.

**(Gal. 6:6; 1 Tim. 5:17-18; Acts 20:27-28)**

We commit to praying for you regularly, particularly in times of need.

**(James 5:14)**

We commit to equipping you to understand and function in the unique ways God has called you to serve in His kingdom.

**(Eph. 4:11-13)**

We commit to appointing elders/deacons and hiring staff who serve in their positions according to biblical qualifications.

**(1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4)**



We commit to mutual accountability, which includes exercising loving church discipline when necessary, for the glory of God, the good of the one disciplined, and the health of LifePoint as a whole.

**(Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5)**

We commit to seek God's will for LifePoint to the best of our ability as we study the Word of God and are led by the Spirit of God.

**(1 Peter 5:1-5)**

## **Your Commitment to the LifePoint Family**

I am a committed follower of Christ. I have recognized my need for a savior and have put my faith in Jesus Christ. I continue to follow Him as Lord by seeking His will and responding to the Spirit's leading with faith and repentance.

**(Rom. 10:9-10)**

I commit to attending LifePoint's corporate worship gatherings on a regular basis.

**(Acts 2:42-47; Heb. 10:23-25)**

I commit to maintaining a lifestyle consistent with godly principles.

**(Rom. 1:26-31; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:18)**

I commit to diligently preserving unity and peace. I have read and understood LifePoint's Statement of Faith. In areas where I might disagree, I commit to not be divisive.

**(Eph. 4:1-3)**

I commit to submission to LifePoint's church leadership. If I choose to begin attending a different church, I will inform LifePoint's leadership.

**(Heb. 13:7, 17)**

I commit to using my gifts, talents, and past experiences for the purposes of serving LifePoint Church and engaging in God's mission.

**(Matt. 25:14-30; Matt. 28:19-20)**

I commit to giving generously of my time, talent, and money toward God's kingdom in a way that models the generosity God has shown me.

**(2 Cor. 9:6-8)**

## What's Next? | Follow-Up Conversation

Below you will find a few questions we would like you to answer. We've given them to you here so you can review them, but ***you need to answer them through the link at the bottom of the LifePoint Family page of our website in order to continue to the next step of the process of joining LifePoint Family.***

**Once you have answered these questions online, one of our leaders will contact you to setup a time to meet together.**

- What's your story of coming to faith in Jesus and making Him the Lord of your life?
  - *Every story is unique, but here are some specific things we'd love to hear about in the telling of your story:*
    - Recognition of your sin and separation from God.*
    - Who told you about Jesus?*
    - When did you make a profession of faith?*
    - Share any previous experience you have in church.*
- What has God been doing in your life?
- What gifts and talents has God given you, and how do you see those being used at LifePoint or in the Kingdom?
- Why do you want to become part of the LifePoint Family?

# LifePoint Church Statement of Faith

**Introduction:** This Statement of Faith is a description of what we as a church leadership believe the Word teaches about these topics. It is by far not exhaustive, nor do we claim that it is entirely definitive in each of these areas. They do however describe what we would teach regarding these areas of doctrine.

**God the Father** - In the Scriptures, God declares himself as Creator of all (Deut. 6:4; Col. 1:16), who has revealed Himself in three distinct Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14), yet who is one in being, essence, and glory (John 10:30). God is Eternal (Psalm 90:2), Infinite (1 Tim. 1:17), and Sovereign (Psalm 93:1; Dan. 4:34-35) God is Omniscient (Psalm 139:1-6), Omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-13), Omnipotent (Rev. 19:6), and Unchanging (Mal. 3:6). God is Holy (Isa. 6:3), Just & Perfect (Deut. 32:4), and Righteous (Exo. 9:27). God is Love (1 John 4:8), Gracious (Eph. 2:8), Merciful (1 Peter 1:3), and Good (Rom. 8:28; Psalm 34:8; Psalm 145:7).

**Jesus Christ** - The Scriptures declare the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was both fully God and fully man. (Col. 2:9) He is the expressed image of the Father, (Heb. 1:3) who, without ceasing to be God, became man in order that He might demonstrate who God is and provide the means of salvation for humanity. (Mat. 1:21; John 1:18; Col. 1:15) Jesus Christ was conceived of the Holy Spirit and was born of the Virgin Mary. He is fully God and truly man. He lived a perfect, sinless life, (1 Peter 2:22-23) and His teachings are entirely true (Isa. 14; Mat. 1:23). The Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross for all humanity (John 1:12; 1 John 2:2) as a substitutionary sacrifice (Isa. 53:5-6). We hold that His death is sufficient to provide salvation for all who receive Him as Savior (John 1:12; Acts 16:31; Rom. 10:9-13); that our justification is grounded on the shedding of His blood (Rom. 5:9; Eph. 1:7); and that it is attested to by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead (Mat.28:6; 1 Peter 1:3). The Scriptures state that the Lord Jesus Christ ascended to Heaven in His glorified body (Acts 1:9-10) and is now seated at the right hand of God as our High Priest and Advocate (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25).

**The Holy Spirit** - The scriptures bear witness to the deity and person of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 5:3-4) It is only through Him that the Body of Christ, the Church, is empowered to obey the Great Commandment (Luke 10:27; John 15:9-17) and the Great Commission (Mat. 28:19-20). He regenerates sinners (Titus 3:5) and indwells believers at the moment of faith in Christ (Rom. 8:9; Act 19:2-7). The work of Redemption was necessary and accomplished God's purposes so that the Spirit of God could indwell the believer by faith (Gal. 3:13-14). He is the agent by whom Christ baptizes all believers into His body (1 Cor. 12:13; Mark 1:7,8). He is the seal by whom the Father guarantees the salvation of believers unto the day of redemption (Eph. 1:13-14). He is the Divine Teacher who illumines believers' hearts and minds as they study the Word of God (1 Cor. 2:9-16). The scriptures state that the Holy Spirit is ultimately Sovereign in the distribution of

all spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:11). We believe that Spiritual gifts are still given today under His Sovereign control and in accordance to the guidelines established for their expression in the Word as seen in 1 Cor. 12-14. Example lists of gifts are in 1 Cor. 12:7-11, Eph. 4:7-12 and Rom. 12:6-8.

We understand the Scriptures to teach that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is accomplished at the moment of Salvation when the Spirit of God places the new believer into the body of Christ (Eph. 4:4,5; 1 Cor. 12:13, Eph. 1:11-13). In Eph. 4:5 the Scripture says there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, however we are commanded to be filled continually and in increasing measure with the Spirit at all times for the Glory of God. (Eph. 3:19; 5:18) There may be times in the believer's life when a special filling or empowerment of the Spirit is given for a specific task or purpose. We understand this to be a sovereign work of the Spirit of God where the believer is "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 4:8,29-31) and will often result in deep transformation of the individual and increased fruitfulness in ministry. However the ongoing "filling" is always contingent on the believer's surrender and yielding to the Spirit of God (Eph. 4:29-32; Eph. 5:17-21). The gifts of the Spirit are given for the purpose of mission, edification of the body, and the equipping of the saints for works of service (Eph. 4:12-13), but do not impart spiritual maturity. The true test of spiritual maturity is the evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in the believer's life, as seen in Gal. 5:22-25, which in essence reveal the character of Jesus Christ as we are being conformed into His image (Rom. 8:29).

**The Bible** - The Holy Scriptures are comprised of the Old and New Testaments and they are the inspired, infallible, and authoritative Word of God (Mat. 5:18; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). We hold the Bible to be inerrant in its original writings, and the complete and final authority for faith and practice (2 Tim. 3:16-17). While still using the individual writing styles of the human authors, the Holy Spirit perfectly guided them to ensure they wrote precisely what He wanted written, without error or omission (2 Peter 1:20-21). All believers are exhorted to study the Scriptures and diligently apply them to their lives. The scriptures are totally sufficient and must not be added to, superseded, or changed by later tradition, extra-biblical revelation, or worldly wisdom. Every doctrinal formulation, whether of creed, confession, or theology must be put to the test of the full counsel of God within the Holy Scripture.

**Mankind** - The Scriptures declare that God created mankind—male and female—in His own image and likeness, free of sin, for his Glory so that they might enjoy His fellowship forever. Tempted by Satan, but under the sovereignty of God, man freely chose to disobey God, bringing sin, death and condemnation to all mankind. All human beings, therefore, are totally depraved by nature and by choice. Alienated from God without defense or excuse, and subject to God's righteous wrath, all of mankind is in desperate need of the Savior (Gen. 3:1-6; Rom. 3:10-19, 23; Rom. 1:18, 32).

**Salvation** - Salvation is received by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone (Eph. 2:8,9; Gal. 2:16). When an unbeliever acknowledges his sin and believes in the finished and substitutionary work of Christ on the cross he/she is saved (John 1:12; Rom. 10:8-10; 1 Cor. 15:3,4). Through faith in Christ, the unbeliever is redeemed, adopted and justified (Eph. 1:7; Rom. 5:1, 8-10; Gal. 3:11,16,24). Good works and obedience are results of salvation, not requirements for salvation (Eph. 2:8-10). Just as good works cannot earn salvation, neither does it need good works to be maintained or sustained. However, good works and changed lives are the inevitable results of salvation (James 2).

**Eternal Security of the Believer** - It is God's divine decision to save a person, (Eph. 1:4) and it is God's kindness, forbearance, and patience that lead that person to repentance (Rom. 2:4). All glory for the salvation and security of every believer belongs to God alone (Rom. 3:21-31; Eph. 1:7-9; Eph. 2:8-9, Jude 1:24-25). We understand that, due to the greatness, sufficiency, and perfection of Christ's sacrifice, everyone who is born again by the Spirit through Jesus Christ is eternally assured of salvation from the moment of conversion (Rom. 8:1, 38-39; Eph. 1:13-14; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24). This assurance relies on God's decisive grace rather than on the works of the Christian. Obedience, good works, and fruit-bearing do not earn or retain the believer's salvation but rather are indications of the person's love for Christ (Luke 6:46; Luke 7:47; John 14:21; James 2:17-18).

Eternal security in salvation relies on the Lord's guarantee of each believer's adoption as His son or daughter (Gal. 4:4-7), His seal of the believer by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14), and the conviction that God gives the Holy Spirit to each believer as a down payment toward future bliss in heaven (2 Cor. 1:21-22). A person who professes genuine faith in Christ immediately becomes His possession (Acts 2:40-41; Acts 16:31), and nothing can snatch that person out of His hands (John 10:27-29). Having been bought with the price of Jesus Christ's crucifixion as complete payment for sin, Christians are not their own. They are Christ's possession (1 Cor. 6:19-20). This assurance is absolutely certain, reserved in heaven, protected by God's unlimited power (1 Peter 1:4-5).

**The Church** - The Church is the Body of Christ, a spiritual organism made up of all believers from Pentecost until the Rapture. (1 Thes. 4:13-17; 1 Cor. 12:12-14; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 1:22-23, 5:25-27; Rev. 21:2,3,9). The Scriptures teach that water baptism and the Lord's Supper are the two outward Testaments to faith that Jesus left his disciples. Baptism by immersion is the believer's testimony to his personal faith in Jesus Christ and identification with Him, and the Lord's Supper is a remembrance of Christ's death and shed blood (Mat. 28:19-20; Acts 2:41-42, Acts 18:8; 1 Cor. 11:23-26). Through the church, believers are to be taught to obey the Lord and to testify concerning their faith in Christ as Savior and to honor Him by holy living. We believe that the Great Commission is the primary mission of the Church, which is to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and of Holy Spirit. It is the obligation of all believers to witness, by word, life and deed to the truths of God's Word. (Mat. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 5:19-20).

**Israel and the Church** - The Scriptures state that Israel is God's chosen nation and people to be a light to the nations and through whom reveal the Messiah (Gen. 12:1-3, Gen. 28:13, Psalm 105:9-11, Psalm 132:13-14, Rom. 9:4,5). God's election of Israel for this unique relationship is irrevocable (Rom. 11:26-29, Jer. 31:31-33, Heb. 8:8-13, Zech. 12:10). The New Covenant instituted by Jesus in the presence of his disciples was then extended to all Gentiles as symbolized by the giving of the Spirit to Cornelius and his household. (Acts 10:1-48; Acts 11:18; Acts 15:6-11) The inclusion of Gentiles into the body of Christ was the mystery hidden from men's understanding but revealed through the Apostles and prophets, (1 Cor. 2:6-8) namely, that God's plan from eternity was to unite all men, whether Jew or Gentile, into one body through faith in Jesus and thereby create a glorious bride unto the praise of His Glory. (Eph. 3:3-6, Eph. 5:25-26) As Gentile believers, we now participate in the spiritual promises of the Abrahamic covenant, but not the physical promises granted to the nation of Israel. (Gal. 3:7-9) There is also no salvation apart from Jesus Christ, whether one is a Jew or Gentile (Rom. 9:6-8), for "not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are [physically] his offspring." Today, those Jews who

do not recognize Jesus as their Messiah are under a God-given blindness (Rom. 11:25) until the full completion of His Bride. Finally, because of the rich heritage we have received from the Jewish nation (John 4:22, Rom.9:24-26), and that through them came Jesus our Lord and Savior, we believe that as Gentile believers we are to show mercy to the Jews (Mat. 25:40, Rom. 11:30-32), bless them (Gen. 12:3) and pray for them (Psalm 122:6).

**Creation vs. Evolution** - The Scriptures bear witness to the fact that God spoke the universe into existence by His Word in six twenty-four hour days and that before He created the universe, nothing except God existed (Gen. 1; Exo. 31:17; Psalm 33:6-9; Acts 17:24; Heb. 11:3; Col. 1:16). All the Godhead was present in creation employing his divine power and omniscience through the spoken Word (John 1:1-3) and by the action of the Spirit. (Gen. 1:2) In creation we see God reveal His glory, divine nature, eternal power, infinite wisdom, and supreme authority (Isa. 43:7; Psalm 19:1-2; Jer. 10:12; Rom.1:20; Rev. 4:11). The Scriptures teach that all people are descendants of Adam and Eve, whom God created personally and individually and as complete human beings (Gen. 1:26-27; Gen. 2:7; Gen. 2:21-22; 1 Cor. 11:8-9).

**Angels and Demons** - The Scriptures indicate that angels and demons are real, not just some cosmic force. They teach that God created the angels to be His servants and messengers (Dan. 9:20-23; Psalm 148:2; Heb. 1:14). The Bible teaches the literal and personal existence of Satan who is the fallen angel Lucifer and who led a myriad of angels in rebellion against God (Isa. 14:12-17; Eze. 28:12-15; Luke 10:18). He is the great enemy of God and man, and the demons are his servants in evil (Eph. 6:12-18). He and his demons will be eternally punished in the lake of fire (Mat. 25:41; Rev. 20:10).

**Eschatology (Doctrine of Future Events)** - The Scriptures teach us of the “blessed hope” of the believer, (Titus 2:13) and the personal and imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to call away His saints (1 Thes. 4:13-18). We believe that the scriptures teach of a literal 7 year time of Tribulation that will come upon this earth in judgment for sin during which the Anti-Christ will be revealed and seek to oppose all righteousness and the prosperity of Israel (Mat. 24,25; Rev. 8-18). The Scriptures teach the visible and bodily return of Christ to the earth with His saints to establish His promised millennial kingdom (Zec. 14:4-11; 1 Thes. 1:9,10; Rev. 19:11-16, 20:1-6). The scriptures teach the physical resurrection of all men—the saints to everlasting joy and bliss, and the wicked to eternal punishment in the lake of fire (Mat. 25:46; John 5:28-29; Rev. 20:5-6, 12-13). The Scriptures indicate that the souls of believers are, at death, absent from the body and present with the Lord, (2 Cor. 5:8), where they await their resurrection when spirit, soul, and body are reunited to be glorified forever with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23, 3:21; 1 Thes. 4:16-17). The souls of unbelievers remain, after death, in conscious misery until their resurrection when, with soul and body reunited, they shall appear at the Great White Throne judgment and shall be cast into the Lake of Fire to suffer everlasting punishment (Mat. 25:41-46; Mark 9:43- 48; Luke 16:19-26; 2 Thes. 1:6-10; Rev. 20:11-15). After this God will establish the new heaven and new earth wherein will dwell righteousness and peace forever (Rev. 20-21).

#### **FINAL COMMENTS:**

As someone who attends LifePoint you may hold a differing view in regard to something expressed herein. We want to say you are welcome to attend and join our fellowship even if you are not in full agreement with all parts of this Statement of Faith. In that regard, we invite you to dialogue with us so

that we might explain more fully why we believe what we have stated and to understand better your perspective on the scriptures.

We do not believe that all things in this affirmation of faith are of equal weight. Some of what is stated here would fall under what we consider “Convictions on Scripture” which are not essential to the heart of the Gospel and to faith in Jesus Christ. We do not believe that every part of this affirmation must be believed in order to be saved. Our desire is to embrace and teach “the whole counsel of God.” Our aim is to encourage a hearty adherence to the Bible, the fullness of its truth, and the glory of its Author. We believe Biblical doctrine stabilizes saints in the winds of confusion and strengthens the church so as to give her a response to the great systems of false religion and secularism.

We believe that the strong meat of God-centered doctrine needs to be sustained in an atmosphere and demonstration of Christ-honoring grace so that truth and grace, justice and mercy, and passion and humility are united in the bond of peace.

We believe that the cause of unity in the church is best served by elevating the value of truth, and then demonstrating to the world how Christians can love each other across boundaries rather than by removing them. Only in this way will we see in a small measure what Jesus prayed for in John 17:21, “...that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”

We do not claim infallibility for this statement of faith and are open to refinement and correction from Scripture. Yet we do hold firmly to these truths as we see them and encourage you to search the Scriptures together with us to see if these things are so. As conversation and debate take place, it may be that we will learn from each other, and the boundaries will be adjusted, even possibly folding formerly disagreeing groups into closer fellowship.

In closing, these are the doctrines of our faith around which we desire to be united. This means that if you are in leadership or teaching in some capacity within LifePoint, we would ask that it be done in harmony with the positions expressed here. If you believe otherwise, please refrain from teaching your view for the sake of the unity of the body. If this church is or becomes your “home”, then we believe God would have us all strive earnestly for the sake of the Gospel and to preserve the unity of this body in the bond of peace and brotherly love.

Respectfully submitted,

The Elders of LifePoint Church



## **APPENDIX B**

# Biblical Eldership: Understanding Elder Qualifications

### **Introduction**

As a church, we believe that God has given the primary task of leadership and shepherding to a plurality of men referred to interchangeably as elders, bishops, overseers, or pastors.<sup>1</sup> If God has called elders to lead the body, who should those elders be? How should they function? How should they be characterized?

The primary aim of this paper concerns the character and qualifications of elders. In 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9, Paul lists qualifications for elders. Of note, elder qualifications primarily concern character traits and heart attitudes that reveal themselves over several years of Christian living. Generally, these characteristics are straightforward; most agree upon their interpretation. For instance, “[not] quick-tempered” is universally agreed upon as an individual not prone to a short fuse or outbursts of anger. However, there are two qualifications understood in different ways. This paper seeks to interpret and clarify “husband of one wife”<sup>2</sup> and “having children who believe.”<sup>3</sup>

### **“Husband of One Wife”**

This qualification has been understood in multiple ways. 1) The first (and most literal understanding) is that this qualification is a prohibition against polygamy. An elder must not be married to multiple women. 2) Another view is that this qualification excludes from eldership those who have been divorced and remarried. Being remarried would mean they have had more than one wife. 3) A third understanding is that an elder must be characterized as being faithful and committed to his wife.<sup>4</sup>

It is our understanding that polygamy is clearly out of the question for elders. However, we do not understand Paul to be excluding all divorced/remarried men. Rather, we believe that Paul is referring to the present status of a man.

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<sup>1</sup> See Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 913. Grudem provides a detailed discussion of the interchangeable nature of these terms. For the sake of this paper, we will refer to this office as “elder.”

<sup>2</sup> 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6. For the sake of formal equivalency, this paper will use the New American Standard Version.

<sup>3</sup> Titus 1:6.

<sup>4</sup> This would go beyond just commitment to staying married. It also includes moral and sexual purity (not addicted to pornography, not lustful).

### 1 - All of the Qualifications Refer to Present Status

All of the elder qualifications pertain to the present status of a man, not his entire past. For instance, “never violent” doesn’t mean never violent. Instead, it means “not currently violent.” Paul demonstrates this himself. Prior to becoming a believer, Paul was described “ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women.”<sup>5</sup> Through his relationship with Christ, Paul changed. His present status is one of non-violence, even if he had been violent at one time.

These qualifications don’t mean someone who has never been a lover of money, rather, he isn’t a lover of money now. They don’t mean he has always been above reproach. They mean that he is above reproach now. If the rest of the qualifications refer to present status, why would one qualification refer to one’s entire past? As Grudem states, “If we made these qualifications apply to one’s entire past life, then we would exclude from office almost everyone who became a Christian as an adult.”<sup>6</sup>

### 2 – “One Woman Man”

This phrase in Greek is *μῆς γυναικός ἀνὴρ* (*mias gunaikos aner*). Literally, this phrase is rendered “one woman man.”<sup>7</sup> While renderings such as “faithful to his wife”<sup>8</sup> or “he must only have one wife”<sup>9</sup> may translate the correct sentiment, valid interpretation must deal with what Paul meant by “one woman man.”

### 3 – What Paul Could Have Said

While it’s never best to “argue from silence,” what Paul could have easily said (but didn’t say) should be considered in the evidence. “Paul could have said ‘having been married only once’ if he had wanted, but he did not.”<sup>10</sup> He simply could have added a participle, which he frequently does. He could have said *gegonos mias gunaikos aner* “having been a one woman man.” He used this exact phraseology two chapters later in 1 Timothy 5:9 in speaking about widows “having been the wife of one husband.” Paul could have easily communicated that an elder could not be divorced and remarried if he had wanted.

### 4 – What About Remarried Widows?

For the sake of consistency, those arguing against a divorced/remarried man becoming an elder based on “one woman man” would have to make the same argument in terms of widows. If that phrase

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<sup>5</sup> Acts 9:3.

<sup>6</sup> Grudem, 917.

<sup>7</sup> New Strong’s Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek New Testament, 58. *μῆς* – one. *γυναικός* – woman/wife. *ἀνὴρ* – man.

<sup>8</sup> New International Version; New Living Translation.

<sup>9</sup> GOD’S WORD translation.

<sup>10</sup> Grudem, 917.

is taken to mean “only one woman,” it would have to also be taken to mean that a remarried widower would be unqualified. As far as I can tell, no one argues for that position. A lack of argumentation shows inconsistency.

## Summary

With these in mind, we would agree that Paul intends to communicate that a husband is faithful to his wife. The character of his life is that he has eyes for his spouse. Such qualifications stand in stark contrast to sexual conduct in the Roman world, particularly the island of Crete. Phil Ryken correctly depicts the sexual climate of that day. “The Greeks and the Romans of the day generally tolerated gross sexual sin. Polygamy was practiced by both Greeks and Jews. Marriage was undermined by frequent divorce, widespread adultery, and rampant homosexuality.”<sup>11</sup> Finding men committed to their wives and a biblical understanding of God’s design for marriage was of first importance as Paul urged Timothy and Titus to find leaders.<sup>12</sup>

### “Having Children Who Believe”

Another difficult text concerns “having children who believe.”<sup>13</sup> Does this phrase mean that each of an elder’s children must be believers? What if he has young children who haven’t yet trusted in Christ? What if his grown children deny the faith? Here there are two primary interpretations. The first view reads and interprets the text straightforwardly. “If a man’s children fall away (either doctrinally or morally), he is at that point disqualified from formal ministry in the church.”<sup>14</sup> Conversely, the second interpretive option suggest that Paul is making contrast not between believing and unbelieving children, but between obedient, respectful children and uncontrolled children.<sup>15</sup>

We understand Paul’s intent concerning “having children who believe” in terms of the latter option. Paul consistently refers to the general submission and behavior of an elder’s children as criterion for selecting elders.

### 1 – What Does “Children” Mean?

The word for “children” in Titus 1:6 is τέκνα (*tekna*). Tekna means “children” and specifically has in mind younger children.<sup>16</sup> Thus, Paul clearly has in mind children at home. While there may be disqualify

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<sup>11</sup> Phil Ryken, “1 Timothy,” Reformed Expository Commentary.

<sup>12</sup> Thabiti Anyabwile has a helpful set of questions for determining if an elder can be considered a “one woman man.” <https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/thabitianyabwile/2007/10/08/finding-reliable-men-one-woman-man/>.

<sup>13</sup> This is the specific wording in Titus 1:6.

<sup>14</sup> Douglas Wilson, “The Pastor’s Kid” in *Credenda/Agenda*, vol. 2, no. 3.

<sup>15</sup> Alexander Strauch, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership* (Littleton: Lewis & Roth Publishers, 1995), 229.

<sup>16</sup> Strong’s, 89.

implications as to why one has rebellious adult children, this alone would not necessarily disqualify a man from eldering.

#### 2 – *Parallel Qualifications – 1 Timothy 3:5.*

Paul lists the same general qualifications for elders in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. Regarding children, Paul writes “He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?)”<sup>17</sup> Here, the qualification is that an elder must have his children under control. Paul grounds this with a rhetorical thought. If a man can’t lead his children, how can he lead the church?

The general rule of hermeneutics is that not all Scripture is equally clear. Therefore, a clear passage can be used to shed light on a not-so-clear passage. In parallel passages that have the same general qualifications, and a clear understanding of 1 Timothy 3 helps interpret a more difficult passage in Titus 1.

#### 3 – *What Does “Pistos” Mean?*

Taking the previous argument one step further, we must define “believing” in Titus 1:6. The word here is πιστά (*pista*). *Pista* can be translated as “believing,” as most translations do. However, it can also rightly be translated “faithful.”<sup>18</sup> William Mounce argues that it’s range of meaning can connote the idea “submissive,” “trustworthy,” or “obedient.”<sup>19</sup> Taken with the phrase that comes next, “not accused of dissipation or rebellion,” “faithful” makes sense.

#### 4 – *Actions of Personal Responsibility*

All of the characteristics listed in both 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are actions of personal responsibility. Therefore, it should be expected that this requirement would not break that pattern. “Requiring that his children have saving faith is to require personal responsibility for the salvation of another, something I don’t see taught in Scripture.”<sup>20</sup>

In the end, Paul has in mind children at home and under one’s supervision. *Pistos* can indeed mean “believing.” However, the goal is to determine what Paul meant by it, rather than what it could mean. In context and in conjunction with 1 Timothy 3:5-6, it seems that Paul has in mind faithful and obedient children, not regenerate children. Therefore, a man who modeled being unable to control his household is disqualified from the role of elder.

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<sup>17</sup> 1 Timothy 3:5-6.

<sup>18</sup> Strong’s, 71.

<sup>19</sup> William Mounce, “Pastoral Epistles,” *The Word Biblical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 388.

<sup>20</sup> Justin Taylor, “Unbelief in an Elder’s Children,” *Desiring God*, February 1, 2007, available at <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/unbelief-in-an-elders-children#ftn2>.

### **Summary**

Taken together, Paul urges Titus and Timothy to find men that are faithful in leading their homes. “Marriage and parenting act as a proving ground for elder fitness.”<sup>21</sup> There are similarities between being a husband or father and eldering. In both, a man takes a leadership role and bears the primary responsibility in helping those under his care flourish. May God grant us a plethora of qualified leaders!

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<sup>21</sup> Jeramie Rinne, Church Elders (Wheaton: Crossway, 2014), 25.

# Understanding Deacon Qualifications

### Introduction

Deacons are given to the church as vital servants for carrying out the mission of the church. They aren't just grunt workers. They are strategic mobilizers for carrying out gospel ministry. Following a listing of elder qualifications, 1 Timothy 3:8-13 is the only passage mentioning the qualifications for deacons. Like elder qualifications, the focus is primarily upon moral character, rather than any particular skillset. Using the pattern of Acts 6:1-6 as a prototype, deacons partner with and alleviate the workload of elders.<sup>1</sup>

The primary aim of this paper concerns the character and qualifications of deacons. Of note, deacon qualifications are straightforward and primarily concern character traits and heart attitudes that reveal themselves over several years of Christian living. However, debates exist concerning Paul's mention of women. Does he mean "female deacons" or "wives of deacons"? This paper seeks to examine deacon qualifications with interest given to understanding the role of women and the office of deacon.

### Agreed Upon Qualifications

Most of the deacon qualifications are rarely disputed. Nonetheless, these characteristics are important and worthy of comment.

- **Dignified** – They are worthy of respect, honor, and imitation.
- **Not double-tongued** – They are not slanderers or gossips. They are careful and sincere in speech.
- **Not addicted to much wine** – Here, the Greek literally translates as "They pay attention to their wine." The obvious understanding is that they aren't drunkards.
- **Not greedy for dishonest gain** – They are not looking for deceitful ways to get rich quick. Moreover, they steward well financially. This is especially important when providing oversight over the church's budget and benevolence ministry.
- **Hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience** – Deacons are not required to be able to teach, like elders (1 Tim. 3:2). However, they must have a clear grasp of doctrine.
- **Tested** – They are observed, assessed, and qualified. This means that there must be a process for becoming a deacon.

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<sup>1</sup>We think of elders as "servant leaders" and deacons as "leading servants."

## Female Deacons

### **Understanding of 1 Timothy 3:11**

Now, let's get into the real reason for a *White Paper* on this topic. In 1 Timothy 3:11, does Paul mean "wives of deacons" or "female deacons"? It is important to note that we must seek to gain insight into what the Bible intends to communicate, rather than what a certain group has traditionally held or another group might want to read into the text.<sup>2</sup>

Two things jump out in doing a quick comparison between elder and deacon qualifications in 1 Timothy 3. First, deacons don't have to be able to teach like elders do. Second, a cursory reading makes it look like Paul is giving qualification for deacon wives, but not for elder wives.

The phrase "their wives" is not the best rendering of the Greek, which is an argument made clear elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> Difficulty comes in translating the phrase *γυναικας ὡσαύτως* (*gunaikas hosautos*) in the context of the passage.

#### *Several Common Translations*

NIV	"In the same way, the women"
ESV	"Their wives likewise"
NLT	"In the same way, their wives"
NASB	"Women must likewise"
KJV	"Even so must their wives"

Interestingly, the ESV provides the above translation; however, it footnotes that it could also mean "wives, likewise" or "women, likewise." The Greek literally reads "women likewise." In these renderings, translators made interpretive decisions. While these translations are legitimate, the question remains "What did Paul mean?"

If understood as "women likewise," Paul is giving qualifications for female deacons. This makes much more sense than the idea that deacon wives need qualifications but elder wives do not. This view

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<sup>2</sup> Andreas Köstenberger, "Can Women Be Deacons?," Biblical Foundations notes "Many conservative churches are hesitant to appoint women deacons because deacons often have a governing role. They fear that having women deacons may suggest theological liberalism, since Scripture does not permit women to serve in governing positions (see esp. 1 Tim. 2:12; 5:17). However, the problem here is not women deacons but the unbiblical understanding of the role of deacon." In other words, if deacons were functioning like elders (which is the case in many churches), the problem is with that church's understanding of leadership, not women being deacons.

<sup>3</sup> Andreas Köstenberger, "Can Women Be Deacons?," Biblical Foundations; Tom Schreiner, "Hermeneutical and Exegetical Challenges in the Pastoral Epistles," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*, Fall 2003: 4-17; Danny Akin, "1 & 2 Timothy and Titus," *Christ-Centered Exposition* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2013), 63.

also makes more sense of the flow of the passage. “Likewise” serves as Paul’s transition of thought from one group to the next.

### **Male Deacons**

Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. (1 Timothy 3:8-10)

### **Female Deacons**

Women likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. (1 Timothy 3:11)

### **Male Deacons**

Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. (1 Timothy 3:12)

### **Male and Female Deacons**

For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. (1 Timothy 3:13)

It is our understanding that Paul is talking about the same office held by men and women who are charged with nearly identical qualifications.

### **Phoebe: Deacon or Servant?**

At the end of Romans, Paul writes “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon/servant at the church at Cenchreae, that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and myself as well.”

Depending on translation, Phoebe is referred to as a deacon or servant.<sup>4</sup> This is the same word (*diakonos*) used in 1 Timothy 3 for the office of deacon. It’s possible that Paul could be calling her a servant without the office in mind. But in context, why would he do that? Rather, it seems that by connecting Phoebe and her role to a specific church, “deacon/servant of the church at Cenchreae,” Paul has in mind something more than generic serving.

Michael Szigel, Professor of Theological Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary, writes “This may seem insignificant until we realize that whenever the Greek phrase ‘\_\_\_\_\_ of the church at location’ is used in the New Testament and the earliest Christian literature, the personal designation refers to an office, not just a generic function.”<sup>5</sup> Therefore, if Phoebe is a mere generic helper of the church at

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<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, the ESV says “servant” but footnotes that it could also be translated “deacon.” Meanwhile, the NIV says “deacon” but footnotes that it could also be translated as “servant.” The word *diakonos* literally means “servant.” Like the word “baptism,” *diakonos* is often transliterated into English as “deacon.”

<sup>5</sup> Michael J. Szigel, “Did the Apostles Establish the Office of Deaconess?,” *Retro Christianity*, April 14, 2012. Available at <http://www.retrochristianity.org/2012/04/14/did-the-apostles-establish-the-office-of-deaconess/>.



Cenchrae, this is the only this specific construction is used this way in the earliest Christian literature.<sup>6</sup> Tom Schreiner, Professor of New Testament at Southern Seminary, summarizes the biblical evidence in this way.

- First, the word “likewise” suggests that Paul continues to speak of deacons.
- Second, the qualifications listed in 3:11 are remarkably similar to the same qualifications already listed in 1 Timothy 3:8.
- Third, a reference to wives is improbable, for then Paul would be addressing the wives of deacons and saying nothing about the wives of elders, which is quite unlikely because elders had greater responsibility than deacons.<sup>7</sup>

### **Church History**

While the Bible is sufficient in and of itself, it can be helpful to understand how the early church functioned. Historical theology points us to what believers have done in the past. Historical theology may not always point us in the right direction, but it may help us view things more clearly. The Bible is the most important voice, but church history can be an affirming background chord.

In AD 111, Pliny, Governor of Bithynia, reported torturing two women who called themselves deaconesses. He asked if they were Christians. They responded that they were Christians and specifically, deaconesses.<sup>8</sup> Thus, right at the end of the Apostolic era, female deacons evidently exist in churches started by the Apostles.

There is also widespread evidence of deaconesses in the second, third, and fourth centuries. During the third century, Constitutions of the Holy Apostles was written as a guidebook for new churches. Regarding deacons, here’s what that book states: “Let the deacons be in all things unspotted, as the bishop himself is to be, only more active; in number, according to largeness of the church, that they may minister to the infirm as workmen that are not ashamed. And let the deaconess be diligent in taking care of women; but both of them ready to minister and to serve.”<sup>9</sup>

Quickly fast-forwarding, Calvin and Spurgeon affirmed female deacons.<sup>10</sup> Even today, evangelical

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Tom Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 772-774.

<sup>8</sup> V.M. Sinton, “Deaconess,” *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 262.

<sup>9</sup> Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, eds., “Constitutions of the Holy Apostles”, *Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries* (Buffalo: Christian Literature Company, 1886), 432.

<sup>10</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion* (Bellingham: Logos Bible Software, 1997); Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 51 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1867), 259.

leaders of different denominations, such as John Piper, Mark Dever, Tim Keller, and John MacArthur, affirm female deacons. Given the historical evidence, female deacons are clearly not a modern invention.

### **Summary**

After examining the exegetical evidence and historical evidence, we believe it is absolutely honoring and important that we recognize the role of women serving as deacons. May God give us a surplus of qualified male and female deacons!

## **APPENDIX D**

# The Roles Of Men And Women In The Church

### **Introduction**

This document is designed to briefly explain the position of LifePoint Church regarding the roles of men and women in the church.<sup>1</sup> We recognize the danger of holding on to a position simply in hopes of preserving traditions of the past. We also see the danger of modifying a position on this topic only in hopes of staying in sync with the cultural norms of the day. Either of those motives would be the wrong foundation on which to write such a paper. Rather, the goal of this paper is to understand what the Scripture says about this topic and then to draw both philosophical and practical conclusions. The church that we love is actually God's church, and it is ultimately He who determines how it should be operated.

As believers, we hold to the belief that the Bible is the authoritative Word of God. Our church doctrinal statement says it this way, that the Bible is "inerrant in the original writings, God-breathed, and the complete and final authority for faith and practice" (2 Tim 3:16-17). In other words, what we think about life and living is sourced in divine revelation. We look to God and His Word for our cues on how to live in this world, how to treat others, how to structure our families, and how to serve His church. This means that our discernment of men's and women's roles should find its footing in the authoritative Word of God.

The topic addressed here—the roles men and women in the church—falls under a much larger umbrella of gender and personhood. Space does not permit us to cover all the related topics of marriage, sexuality, and gender that are found under this category. However, the starting place for each of these topics is the Bible. From the opening scenes of the creation account (Genesis 1-2), God speaks to this broad topic at a foundational level.

### **Complementarity at Creation**

On the first pages of Scripture, we see that God created mankind to bear His image, to rule over the earth and subdue it, and to multiply in it. He created both males and females to do this work and to bear His image (Genesis 1:26-30). From these pages, we see that the dignity, value, and worth of one gender is

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<sup>1</sup>For a more detailed description of our understanding of biblical gender roles, refer to The Danvers Statement, published by the Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood in 1987. This document was officially adopted by LifePoint Church in the year 2014.

not higher than the other. As image bearers of God, both men and women were created to reflect and portray God's likeness to those around them. To give God glory in this specific way is distinctly human, and something that is shared by men and women equally (Isaiah 43:7).

At the same time, this creation account also speaks of the distinctions between men and women, and that God was purposeful in creating them distinctly male and female. In Genesis 2, God determined that man should not be alone, that Adam needed Eve. In creating Eve for Adam, He provided a "helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18). This term causes confusion for some and disgust in others, but ultimately it was a term God used to describe the relationship between husbands and wives in a sinless world. The word "helper" is by no means negative, and is most often used in Scripture to talk about how God engages with mankind (Exodus 18:4, Deuteronomy 33:7, Psalm 33:20). It does not indicate inferiority but rather a distinction of role. In this Genesis account God sets the Eve apart as an "indispensable companion" to Adam.<sup>2</sup> To be a helper "fit for" or "suitable for" her husband, she was created to fulfill a complementary role toward her husband.

This paradigmatic marriage in the garden demonstrates that both men and women, in their distinct roles, function in a way which allows for maximum flourishing for both parties, and they did so before the fall, not after. We do not believe that all women relate to all men in the same way, but what the creation account shows is that in his perfect creation, God made men and women in distinct and complementary ways.

Just as the first relationship was in the garden, all other relationships including those between males and females today have also been marred by sin. The Bible is rife with examples of ways that male and female relationships have been exploited, misused, and selfishly manipulated. Our own lives also demonstrate this devastating truth. The quest to understand God's plan for men and women, whether single or married, in church or at home, is often clouded by our sin and the sinful lives of others. As believers, we rejoice in the fact that God sent his son Jesus into the world to redeem us from our sins by His death and resurrection and to give us eternal life (John 3:16). We also believe this salvation affects us not only personally but is also designed to restore our relationships with one another.

### **Complementarity in the Church**

The pattern given by God for males and females at creation is also foundational to our understanding of men's and women's roles in the church today, a topic that is perhaps now more eagerly debated than ever before. The biblical paradigm for men and women which God established at creation is seen throughout the New Testament, and didn't change after Christ came. In fact, Jesus reiterated the creation of man and woman and the institution of marriage as declared in the garden (Matthew 19:4, Mark 10:6). This is the model we see not only in His instructions for marriage, but also in how He designed the church to function. In the New Testament, marriage between a man and a woman is used as a metaphor for the relationship of Jesus Christ with us, His bride (Eph. 5:22-32).

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<sup>2</sup> Biblical Studies Press. (2006). The NET Bible First Edition Notes (Ge 2:18). Biblical Studies Press

We as a church believe that the biblical approach to men and women in ministry is that the distinctions of men and women be not diminished or erased, but rather celebrated as designed in Scripture. We must presume that the limitations that God has placed on certain forms of leadership, namely the role of elder/pastor, are for our good and the good of the church. To err in being too restrictive or too permissive is to miss the beauty of God's design and our flourishing. We believe that God calls only qualified men to fulfill the role of elder/pastor (1 Timothy 3, Titus 2). We believe that these men are responsible for the authoritative teaching, leading, and oversight of the local church (1 Timothy 2:12, 5:17; Titus 1:6-9; 1 Peter 5:1-3). Although these are unique responsibilities reserved for select qualified men, the role itself is not to be elevated in a way that puts down others or lords undue authority over the rest of the body. Rather, role distinctions like these exist in order that both men and women might "enjoy the beautiful, God-glorifying harmony of robust interdependence."<sup>3</sup> Elders, by definition, are called to shepherd the flock of God (1 Peter 5:2-3), and when they do so humbly, they will embody the role as God designed.

Crucial to our understanding of both men and women serving in the church is the fact that all believers, both men and women, are expected to serve the body of Christ. The Great Commission is given to all believers, and all throughout the New Testament we see it being carried out by faithful men and women who served Christ in a wide variety of ways. Phoebe was a valuable member and a deacon of the church at Cenchrae (Rom. 16:1-2). Priscilla and Aquila together hosted a church in their home (1 Cor. 16:19), and were both instrumental in explaining "the way of God more accurately" to Apollos (Acts 18:26). Euodia and Syntyche, active women at the church in Philippi, were credited with serving right alongside Paul (Philippians 4:3). The apostle Peter spoke to husbands and wives as fellow heirs of the grace of Christ (1 Peter 3:7). These examples and many others highlight the co-laboring that is essential in the body of Christ among both men and women. God designed each of us to serve Him and bring Him glory, and it is His desire that both men and women are to fulfill the roles He has called us to until He returns.

### **Affirmations and Denials**

- We affirm the inherent value, dignity, and worth of men and women as declared in the creation account (Genesis 2).
- We deny any claim that either men or women are greater in dignity, worth, or value in the kingdom of God.
- We affirm that all men and women, regardless of marital status, have been created in God's image.
- We deny that a married individual has any greater value than a single individual.

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<sup>3</sup>Robert Thune, *Gospel Eldership* (New Growth Press, 2016), 4.

- We affirm that God’s good design, His pre-fall creation, assigned different roles to men and to women.
- We deny that the differences in roles of men and women are a result of sin, but they were present at creation and are each distinctly useful in service to God.
- We affirm that both men and women are seen in Scripture as ministers of the gospel and absolutely necessary for the health of the local church.
- We deny that men and women are interchangeable in their roles as laid out in Scripture.
- We affirm the Scriptures’ teaching that the role of pastor and elder is reserved for qualified men who are distinctly responsible for overseeing the church (1 Timothy 5:17, Titus 1:7, 1 Peter 5:1-2), and preaching the Word (1 Timothy 3:2, 2 Timothy 4:2, Titus 1:9).
- We deny any statement that would claim men as being more useful or effective for the gospel than women.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### *1. What defines a “qualified man” fit to serve in the role of elder?*

Several key texts in Scripture outline the qualifications necessary for biblical eldership. 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5b-9 are valuable passages for understanding what God is looking for when calling a man to the office of elder. It is important to note that these qualifications don’t always line up completely with the world’s standards of “qualified.” A man may be talented and successful, yet still not be biblically qualified to be an elder. As a church we want to strive to uphold these standards given by God in His Word.

### *2. How do we know that these roles given in the New Testament weren’t just culture-specific instructions? Should they actually be applied to the 21st century church?*

Scripture teaches that the roles of men and women are rooted in the created order, and not in a cultural trend. Paul himself, in 1 Timothy 2:13, removes the issue of men’s and women’s roles in the church from his cultural context, and discusses them in light of creation. In addition, the comparison of a husband and wife to Christ and the church (Ephesians 5) links marriage to the gospel itself and not to a cultural norm that might have been prevalent in that day, such as worship in the temple of Artemis in Ephesus. We cannot ignore patterns in Scripture which are tied to the very nature of God, His creation, or the good news of salvation.

3. *I know many gifted and intelligent women; why can't they be elders?*

As stated previously, the qualifications for elders are not based on intelligence or even gifting. What remains is the biblical qualifications given in Scripture, which we are called to uphold. However, this is not to say that women are excluded from the work of ministry or places that their gifts and intelligence can be used. The New Testament is full of examples of women who served powerfully in a multitude of ways.

4. *Didn't Jesus come to break down barriers between men and women, and doesn't Paul erase those distinctions (Gal. 3:28)? And don't distinctions like the ones made in this paper go against that?*

Jesus treated women in His day far better than they were treated in society. They served with Him, learned from Him, and even bore witness to His resurrection, and yet He did not diminish the created order or call it into question. In His life and ministry on earth, as well as in His establishment of the church, Jesus did not erase the pre-fall distinctions between men and women (Matthew 19:4, Mark 10:6).<sup>4</sup> It would be speculative and biased to ignore the upholding of the created roles of men and women throughout the New Testament.

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<sup>4</sup>Piper and Grudem, 50 Crucial Questions, 27.

## **APPENDIX E**

# Marriage & Sexuality: Understanding Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage, And Sexuality

### **Marriage**

We believe that marriage was given by God as part of His common grace, and that it has no meaning other than the meaning given to it by Him (Genesis 2:18-24). We believe that marriage has been subjected to the curse of the Fall, but believers, living in obedience to Scripture and under control of the Holy Spirit, can begin to experience peaceful, productive, and fulfilled marriage as intended by God (Genesis 3:16; 1 Peter 3:7).

We believe that the marriages of believers are a picture of the loving relationship of Christ and His church, with the husband loving his wife as Christ loves the church and the wife responding to her husband's loving leadership as the church responds to Christ (Ephesians 5:18-33).

We believe that as believers' marriages are to illustrate Christ's relationship with His church, believers should choose to marry those who have been born again and have salvation in Christ (2 Corinthians 6:14).

We believe that the institution of marriage was created by God. Thus, only God in His Word defines what marriage is. We believe that biblical marriage is the joining of one man with one woman in a single, exclusive union (Genesis 2:23-24).

We believe that marriage is always a public, formal, and officially recognized covenant between a man, woman, and God. We encourage that where no covenant exists, or can be discerned, between a cohabitating couple prior to coming to faith in Christ, family units should be preserved to the extent possible. And if possible, we encourage them to marry. We believe that where a valid marriage has been established prior to coming to faith in Christ, the couple should remain married (1 Corinthians 7:24).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The reality is that we live in a broken world. This paper does not encompass every situation or scenario, so each situation will be handled on a case-by-case basis.



### **Divorce/Remarriage**

We believe that God hates divorce, permitting it only where there has been unrepentant sexual sin (Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:32, 19:9) or abandonment or abuse (1 Corinthians 7:12-15). We believe that remarriage is permitted to a believing partner, but only when the divorce was biblically permissible and a “significant” length of time has past since the previous marriage.

### **Sexuality**

We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to one another. We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of marriage between a man and a woman (Hebrews 13:4).

We believe that any form of sexual immorality (for instance, adultery, fornication, polygamy, homosexuality, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pedophilia, pornography, or any attempt to alter one's biological gender) is sinful and offensive to God (Leviticus 18:1-30; Matthew 5:28; Romans 1:26-29; 1 Corinthians 5:1, 6:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8).

At the same time, we also believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with God's desires. We teach that the faithful proclamation of God's Word, including the call to repentance, does not constitute hate speech or harassing behavior, but is instead a fundamental part of the church's loving mission to the world (Matthew 28:16-20; 2 Corinthians 5:11-20; 1 Timothy 1:5; 2 Timothy 4:1-2).

We believe that God offers redemption and forgiveness to all who confess and forsake their sin, including sexual sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. We teach that His forgiveness is total and complete (Psalm 103:11-12; 130:3-4; Isaiah 43:25, 44:22; John 5:24; Colossians 2:13-14) and that God imputes the full righteousness of Christ to all believing sinners (2 Corinthians 5:21).

We believe that the forgiven sinner has been cleansed from the guilt of sin, set apart unto God, made holy, and justified before Him (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). We believe that anyone, regardless of their past, who has received that forgiveness is “in Christ” and is a “new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17). In the end, because of our new life in Christ, the Holy Spirit offers victory over sin and temptation as He molds us into the image of Christ (Romans 8:29).



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